

# FORUM

Internal Party Journal of the S.P.G.B.

No. 2

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SIXPENCE

## THE TRIALS OF COMRADE TROTMAN

*"Electoral activity is essentially a short-term method."*

*"The most sensational methods which are useful to other organisations are not necessarily the best for one which bases its case on understanding."*

*"... providing a figure-head for about a month in every five years."*

J. TROTMAN.

According to J. Trotman,

(1) Electoral activity is short-term: socialist propaganda is long-term. Therefore socialist propaganda and contesting elections are opposed.

(2) Electoral activity—that is, fighting elections—is sensational; good for anti-socialist organisations, but bad for a Socialist Party. It is a wrong method.

(3) Elections "provide a figure-head for one month in every five years". Therefore the Socialist Party, when contesting elections, has "heads" (figure-heads), i.e., candidates. If it has "heads", these must be leaders of the "non-heads". Consequently, during elections the Socialist Party becomes non-democratic, i.e., ceases to be Socialist. In fact, the more candidates, the less Socialist.

If these statements are correct, it is self-evident that the S.P.G.B., so far, has been wrong. These statements are NOT consideration of immediate difficulties in Party work—they are a denial of its principles.

### Question of Principles

Trotman states early in his article that "no one will deny that [parliamentary representation] is impossible for us at the moment and nobody argues from this point of view"; in the next sentence, however, "some use this as an argument. This is quite right—"some" is J. Trotman.

Friend T. is evidently not yet quite clear on the meaning of socialist principles. These principles have nothing whatever to do with £800, or £1500, or £49 worth of pamphlets, nor with increases in the Party's debts, or the size of its offices.

The principles of the Party were decided on the facts of Capitalism, out of which they arose, irrespective of practical expediency or immediate applicability. The people who founded it decided that the only way of implementing its policy was by parliamentary representation. That had to be decided first. They decided that without any money, loans or premises.

This Party principle will remain right whether the Party is rich or poor, small or large, gets many votes or none. The first thing, when organising a Party, is to decide what it stands for and how to get it. Then,

starting out to do it, cross your bridges as you come to them. Trotman and his friends prefer to sit at home, frightening each other with ghost stories about the depth of the water.

There are practical difficulties—of course it will be expensive and arduous, but money will be raised, speakers trained, and members gained in the actual work of fighting elections.

The Party's aim, Socialism, determines its nature as an election-fighting organisation. Everything else is secondary to this fundamental thing. The Party can and should announce its desire to contest at every election. If practical considerations (lack of support) deter it, it should say so plainly, telling the worker the difficulties, but making its object and method clear. When members invent reasons for putting the Party's principles into cold storage they take the first step on the road to reformism.

### The Main Purpose

Having dismissed Parliamentary representation because it is not immediately possible, friend J. T. then goes on to consider whether "the Party gains some benefit from contesting an election which is not directly related to this main purpose". Please tell us, Comrade Trotman, what other purpose the Party has which is not even related to its main one.

According to Trotman, among these unrelated secondary purposes are meetings and selling pamphlets. These are not the purposes of the Party, but merely means of making Socialists. Trotman implies that Parliamentary activity is abnormal, that is, irregular and exceptional. If this is true, it must be permanently wrong under any (normal) circumstances.

"Our resources will always be meagre," he says. By this, he evidently has funds (money) in mind. These are not, and never will be, the resources of the Party. Even if they were, to say that they will always be meagre can only mean that the Socialist Party will never have the support of many workers.

This is a denial of the meaning of Socialism, which organises class conscious workers politically. If the Party's resources will always be meagre, then the time will never be opportune to run candidates. Although his article is entitled "Is the Time Opportune for Contesting Elections?", Trotman does not spare

one word in 1300 to give us his answer to his own question.

If the resources of the Socialist Party were money, then Capitalism would not be the possession of all surplus money by the capitalist class. The resources of the Party are the enthusiasm and energy of its members, which spring from a clear grasp of its principles.

### Value of Contesting

Trotman's sole test of the value of contesting elections is:

(1) The number of indoor meetings held in the constituencies

(2) The amount of literature sold.

These meetings, he says, could be held without a candidate; and we "only" sold £49 worth of pamphlets more in the year the election took place—"an increase only to be expected during the height of an election", he writes.

Then friend Trotman, who "only" expects us to sell about 2000 pamphlets more during elections than we can when nothing is on, proposes, as his alternative, that this bankrupt Party, impoverished by reckless election spend-thrifts, should print pamphlets and give them away for nothing when the workers don't want them—that is, when elections are OFF, not ON.

Comrade T. does not tell us why he expects more pamphlets to be sold during elections. Why, he snorts, there were no enquiries about the Party after the election, whereas "a small and inexpensive advertisement in an Esperanto journal produced numerous enquiries from all parts of the world".

The enquiries were made only because we ran candidates. The only thing which divides us from the host of freaks and cranks of all kinds, organised in several thousand tin-pot outfits, and makes the S.P. a political party, is the running of candidates independently, in opposition to all other parties.

"When we contest elections . . . we get a great kick out of it," says Trotman. "We all have a strong desire to indulge in it. Election campaigns provide a stimulus for the members and increase their activity," but "the stimulus lasts no longer than the actual campaign" so "it must be guarded against". In other words, it's a good thing so let's stop it.



# THE NATURE OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

## 2. HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

**The mode of change from Capitalism to Socialism cannot be discussed without discussing both the nature of Socialism and the nature of Capitalism, and particular phases of society cannot be discussed without reference to a general theory of history. History in turn is the unique attribute of man. It is possible only because men are what they are, and takes the course it does because men are what they are. A theory of men, a theory of society and a theory of history are the same thing. A theory of history which is not a theory of men or a theory of men which is not a theory of society, is a meaningless abstraction. Society is not a contrivance discovered or agreed upon by men, which they could conceivably relinquish: it is the mode of human existence. But man is not uniquely social, only socially unique. Only human society evolves.**

This is simple enough, yet its implications are not necessarily observed, or may even be repudiated, and a nominal subscribing to

who wants a theory of history without any truck with human nature may only be reacting against the idealist who discusses human nature abstracted from history. But the materialist who thus merely inverts the terms of the abstraction remains idealist—as the atheist who is merely anti-God is an inverted theist, and the Socialist who is merely anti-Capitalist an inverted bourgeois. Socialist theory requires the recognition that human nature determines the fact, and limits the possibilities, of history; while history determines the nature, and conditions the possibilities, of human conduct. To say that human nature is as human nature does (i.e., that human nature is human conduct) is like saying, with the capitalist economists, that “money is as money does” (i.e., that anything is money that serves as money—salt, tobacco, furs, fish, shells, gold, paper—which tells us something about salt, etc., but nothing about money).

The reluctance to distinguish between human nature as the fount of history, and human conduct which is conditioned by history, undermines a unified concept of human society, and shows itself in many ways. It underlies the insistence that language precedes thinking, thus ignoring the dependence of language on the prior capacity to conceive relationships. It leads to the view that since moral codes are laid down by exploiting classes for the guidance of the exploited, then classless Socialism will be amoral. It hinders any practical starting point to the discussion of what Socialism will like by ignoring what is permanent in specifically human nature over and above what is common to all creatures, the need for food, etc. It is a cataract which obscures the unity of history, the gravitational pull which holds history to its orbit, and gives “the historical necessity for Socialism” its necessity. The equating of human nature with human conduct—the view, that is, that environment is the sole determinant of human capacities, is a political weapon of the Communist, not of the Socialist. It is the official cult of Russia, whose academicians teach that there are no natural boundaries to the behaviour of wheat, cows or men, that man is what the State enjoins.

The rich, genetically determined variation in innate individual abilities which is a factor in making human history possible—a myriad multiplication of opposable thumbs—cannot be dismissed without dismissing the basis of biological evolution—which is not the right answer to the false social deductions of some geneticists. The equating of human conduct with human nature merely inverts their error, and opens as many windows to idealism as it closes doors: either the moral nihilism which make Socialism look like the vacuumatic absence of Capitalism, or the moral utopianism which reduces it to a rational idea. One makes it look like nothing, the other like nothing on earth.

F. EVANS.

### The Alternatives

Trotman's alternatives to electioneering are:

- (1) Giving pamphlets away free.
- (2) Provincial propaganda.
- (3) Full-time editors and other staff (unspecified).

But all these things will advance what Trotman abominates—the fighting of elections. If the Party had offices as big as the Dome of Discovery, and gave away enough stuff to fill every lavatory in S.W. London, it would not figure in politics until it contested elections.

Elections are the cheapest form of propaganda, not the dearest. The only unusual outlay is £150. For this we get:

(1) The Party name on the ballot paper. Every elector is forced to face up to our existence, which, otherwise, he does not even know. There is no other way of doing this.

(2) Free postage on about 30,000 election addresses, amounting to roughly £120.

(3) Press publication of announcements, interviews with candidate, reports of meetings which, at advertising rates, would cost many pounds.

(4) Enumeration in books, reports and records of the Party's name and object in the libraries of the world (above all, a clear distinction between the S.P.G.B. and the Labour Party). The beneficial effect on socialists, throughout the world, is incalculable.

(5) Broadcast announcements throughout the world. It is the cheapest money's worth on the market to-day. Even at that, we may have the sporting offer of getting one-eighth of the votes and the return of the £150.

### Deed Follows Word

But all this is relatively unimportant—the fundamental consideration is the implementation of the Party's principles and policy. That the Party maintains its word, that its declaration of intention to fight at the polls for Socialism is followed by its deed, the real action—this, above everything else, shows workers that the Socialist Party means business. That when we say Parliament is the road to Socialism we mean it. That we carry out our intention to genuinely oppose all other parties in the only way possible—at elections.

Neither is Parliamentary election the only consideration; valuable work can be done in local and council elections. Perhaps Comrade T. will advise us whether we should contest these, if the cost is negligible.

A great deal of useful criticism can be levelled against the Party's first election battles. Many of Trotman's alleged “arguments” against electoral work are merely enumeration of obvious defects to be overcome, e.g., lack of activity before and after the actual nomination and polling days, rash expenditure on leaflets and meetings of doubtful value, insufficient attack on the enemy due to inexperience.

These are not reasons for boycotting elections, but for extending and improving Party election contests NOW. The alternative is extinction.

HORATIO.



### Notice from the Education Committee

Come along to the classes at Head Office. Subjects covering a wide range are being dealt with almost every week night from October 6th to April 5th. Your branch has a copy of the timetable, which is also on the notice board at Head Office.

IMPORTANT.—The Writers Class commences Monday, December 1, 8 p.m.. All interested are urged to attend.



materialism may not preclude an actual metaphysical outlook. For instance, there are those for whom it is sufficient to say that human nature is the product of human history, and who regard with suspicion the view that history is the product of human nature. Ask how comes history, and they reply “economics”; ask how comes economics and they reply “food, clothing and shelter.” But the need for food, etc., is common to all creatures. It accounts for their activity, but not for human history. What accounts for history is the peculiar cumulative character of the human economic activity, the special quality of human labour, which rests on the biological structure of men. This links historical with biological evolution, and rescues materialism from the metaphysics which arbitrarily breaks the chain of causal sequence, arbitrarily fixes its undetermined beginning—creation out of nothing, called materialism. This kind of economic determinism parodies historical materialism because its theory of history is not a theory of man but a theory of economics. It sees human nature as the product of history but not history as the product of human nature. The materialist



# SIMPLE ENGLISH AND SOCIALISM

THOSE whose mother tongue is English can naturally be expected to comprehend fairly well, though it is remarkable how incomplete is the knowledge of many English men and women, when confronted with words that they are not in the habit of using every day.

In a country like South Africa, with two official languages, and numerous others, a good vocabulary in any one language is the exception rather than the rule. Even those who regard English as their mother tongue seldom have sufficient words at their disposal to discuss intelligently anything but the most common everyday affairs; while those whose normal speech is Afrikaans or one of the native languages, might acquire considerable fluency in English, but not beyond the two or three thousand words of everyday speech.

Therefore, if socialism is to make headway in places where English is not the one and only language, some consideration must be given to the needs of those whose knowledge of it lacks depth, or who only regard it as a somewhat difficult secondary language.

Considering the Party's Object and D. of P. from this view, one finds that the first word "object" has several meanings. English-speaking people have no difficulty in discovering what is meant, but is the same true of non-English speaking people? Would not a word like "purpose" be less ambiguous?

A simplified version of the Object and D. of P. is given below for the consideration of Party members. It will be noted that the appeal is international rather than national.

J. O. B. (S. Africa).

**The Socialist Party of Great Britain**  
**PURPOSE:**—To assist in the organisation of the peoples of the entire world into an economic, political and social system, based on the common ownership and democratic control of the world and all its resources.

## Statement of Facts and Method

1. That the people of all the advanced countries of the world live under the economic, political and social system known as Capitalism. That is, the land, factories, railways, etc., are owned by the Capitalist or Master Class. The rest of the people comprise the working class, by whose labour, on behalf of the capitalist class, wealth is produced.

2. That, arising from the private, class ownership of the means by which all must live, there is a conflict, or class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this conflict can only be ended when the working class decides to take the world and its resources from the master class, to operate by democratic means for the benefit of all, instead of for a privileged minority.

4. That, when the working class has achieved freedom from the domination of capitalism, class struggles will be at an end, since there is no class below the working class.

5. That the working class must achieve its freedom by itself.

6. That, as Governments everywhere exist only to safeguard the interests of the dominant section of the population, by their control of armed forces, police, etc., the working class of the world must organise politically, with full knowledge of what they are doing, to obtain control of all governments. Then, and only then, can they organise the world in their own interests, making an end of privilege and oppression.

7. That each political party represents only the interests of a class. Therefore, the political party of the working class has no common interest with any other party, and must oppose them all.

8. THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, therefore, affirms its opposition to all other political parties, with the exception of those formed on similar lines in other parts of the world. It calls upon the workers of this country in particular, to withdraw their support from other parties, whether they claim to represent their interests or not, and to work for a speedy termination of capitalism, which can only offer privilege for the few, and oppression for the many.

## ON BACKWARD NATIONS

I SUBMIT the following propositions on the subject of "Backward Nations", which summarise the views I put forward at the recent Forums. In order not to take up space unnecessarily, I have refrained from including either argument or evidence for the different propositions as this can be done, where necessary, in reply to specific criticisms.

1. There are no groups of people anywhere on earth, regardless of their present culture, who are incapable of assimilating socialist ideas.

2. The so-called backwardness of groups of people has nothing to do with mental capacity or the capacity to assimilate modern ideas. The culture of such people is complex but of a different kind from that of the West. These groups are coming into the orbit of Western technique at the level of Western understanding, without being burdened with the weight of traditional ideas that helps to hold back the mass of people in the West. Coming in at the present level of Western technique, they borrow the ideas associated with it, including revolutionary ideas. Coming fresher into this machinery, they progress rapidly, shedding primitive or customary ideas almost overnight.

3. Whilst older generations, who have become habituated to old custom, may not be quick in grasping new culture, the young take to new culture easily. Custom is not the sliding grip

4. Outside of Europe and the U.S.A., the mass of the world's population has already come directly into the Western orbit of culture and is being rapidly transformed—for example China, India, Indonesia, Japan, S. America and a large part of Africa. Where the impact of the West is strong, established customs are broken and the way becomes relatively easy to a new culture.

5. From the socialist point of view the mass of people in the West are still backward. The so-called backward groups borrow Western ideas but without the Western traditional background that helps to crab progress. This makes it easier for them to forge ahead. On the basis of progress in this century the "backward" will have reached a common outlook with the "advanced" by the time the latter have accepted the socialist outlook.

(6) All groups of people, regardless of present culture, can understand socialism if it is explained to them in language that is appropriate to their types of culture. Therefore, the attitude of a socialist is to preach Socialism and help to develop a movement for Socialism wherever he may be, regardless of the particular type of culture of the people to whom he is addressing his propaganda.

(7) Finally, it is not essential for all groups

Capitalism (though they probably will) in order to take part in the establishment of Socialism in the world at large.

(8) The above propositions are based upon the fact that, after the long and chequered development of private property society, the modern idea of Socialism has eventually emerged—this idea can be transmitted everywhere.

The terms "East" and "West" that are used above have only been used as a convenient way of marking off highly industrialised areas from those that are behind in this respect.

G. McCLATCHIE.

## Third Degree

An officer of the Malay Regiment, Captain William Dunlop, was fined £187 in Malaya yesterday for causing hurt to three Chinese to extract guerilla information. He was ordered to pay £20 compensation.

Edward Bunce, a rubber planter, was fined £12 10s. for causing hurt to one of the Chinese. He will appeal.

The Chinese gave evidence that Dunlop stuck sharp sticks under their finger nails and cut off lumps of their hair.

The hair was given to Drak traders from Borneo to use as trophies in place of heads. Head-taking is forbidden.—A.P.



# FORUM

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of the S.P.G.B.*

Correspondence and articles should be sent to FORUM, S.P.G.B., 52, Clapham High St., London, S.W.4. Subscriptions 12 months, 7/6d, 6 months 3/9d. Cheques and P.O.'s should be made payable to:-  
E. Lake, S.P.G.B.

## EDITORIAL

DESPITE the problems of launching this new venture, the October issue seems to have been well received by members. At the end of October, two weeks after publication, 900 copies had been distributed from Head Office, and there seems little doubt that very few if any of the 1,000 printed will remain unsold.

As a result of this encouraging start, we have been able to produce a better FORUM this month. Its eight pages and larger print make our work much easier and we are certain will be welcomed by members.

In addition to continuing controversies started last month, and introducing new ones, we include press cuttings, etc., as a regular feature, that were formerly issued as duplicated Speakers' Notes. These notes, even if reduced in number, deserve a wider audience.

Now a word about our editorial task. From letters that we have received to date it would appear that there are some misunderstandings concerning the policy of FORUM. One correspondent had the impression that the Editors would choose the subjects and writers to the exclusion of voluntary contributors.

This, of course, is not the case. For the first issue it was necessary, in order to get started, to plan and arrange the features that appeared in October. But we cannot too strongly emphasise that ALL members should regard FORUM as their own, and we expect to receive articles and correspondence accordingly.

**IF YOU WANT  
FORUM TO BE A  
GREATER SUCCESS  
—INTRODUCE AND  
RECOMMEND IT TO  
OTHER MEMBERS.**

# THE THOMSON DISPUTE

*Letters on S.S. article on "Censorship"  
held over from October.*

From E. Lake.

One objection to the article is that it fails to give a balanced view of the question. The attempt on the part of a few printers to prevent the publication of a statement by Thomson & Co., is condemned with a heavy hand, while the overwhelming censorship exercised by the capitalist class is mentioned only in passing and receives little or no condemnation.

The orthodox press has developed the suppression and distortion of news to a fine art, and yet their hypocritical treatment of the printers' feeble effort was not dealt with by us. However mistaken these men may have been in refusing to print Thomson's statement, we must recognise that they were acting, as they thought, in the interest of their fellow workers. This aspect of the case should at least be appreciated by Socialists.

Another objection to the article is the claim that Trade Unionists should not concern themselves with the constitution of the product of labour. Four examples are given to uphold this claim.

- (1) Vegetarian trade unionists would strike against handling meat.
- (2) Atheistic trade unionists would strike against handling Bibles.
- (3) Christian trade unionists would strike against handling certain scientific matter.
- (4) Cycling trade unionists would strike against handling motor cars.

These examples hardly call for serious discussion. Vegetarian trade unionist meat porters refusing to handle meat is a subject more suited to the pen of the late Mr. Gilbert than to that of our Gilmac.

No doubt these cases would call for our opposition, but other examples may support the opposite point of view.

Assume chemists were working on a certain substance they thought was to be used for medical purposes, and discover it was to be used to spread disease. Should we condemn their refusal to continue the production of this substance? Should we condemn transport workers for refusing to convey troops to a strike area? Should we condemn workers employed in the processing of food, who refused to undertake a method of adulteration which, while strictly legal, would be more than normally injurious to the consumers of the food?

And finally, in the event of some jingo press owner attempting to publish a statement with the object of inciting a frenzied mob to attack the offices of the Socialist Party, should we condemn printers who refused to print such a statement?

The answer is emphatically No!

It is self evident that we cannot lay down a general policy opposing trade union action in this matter. We must consider and decide on such cases as they arise.

From C. C. Groves.

6th July, 1952.

I am opposed to the Editorial for the following reasons:—

1. We are telling the workers that they should give every assistance to their employers in a dispute. I cannot object to Thomson being able to express his point of view, but I cannot ask that the workers involved in the dispute, and other workers, should assist him to do so.

2. In asking workers to assist in the printing of Thomson's article it is equivalent to urging soldiers in an army to load the rifles of their opponents.

3. I think it is to be regretted that such a condemnatory editorial, should have been published when not a word about the Thompson dispute had appeared in the S.S. It seems that we are going out of our way to condemn workers without taking the opportunity of supporting Thompson's employees in their struggle against this avowed anti-union, anti-working-class member of the capitalist class.

From J. Trotman.

I think that the article was correct in what it said. To condone any action directed towards limiting the free expression of opinion by anyone is contrary to the democratic principle of Socialism, and as such is very dangerous policy.

This does not mean that I view Democracy as an absolute or as one of the cardinal virtues of Socialism. It simply means that I recognise the possibility of workers making mistakes. If their ideas are correct they will be able to stand against the ideas of their opponents and there will be nothing to fear from opposition. In short, I argue that the democratic approach is a practical proposition here and now. It seems that some would deny this.

As to the argument that workers are prevented from expressing their ideas by lack of facilities, surely it follows that if they have the power to prevent an article being published they also have the power to demand that their point of view be printed with the opponent's argument; and, in point of fact, the City Press had already agreed to an arrangement of this character in the dispute in question. From the point of view of accuracy and the Party position I see no grounds for complaint.

It is, however, debatable whether such an article serves any useful purpose and certainly any attempt to deal with such a subject needs to be very carefully written, and, in my view, approached from a rather different angle.

As it is, the article could very easily create a false impression that we were taking up the cudgels on behalf of the employers, and that is not our job at any time. I think a much stronger sympathy for the workers and a greater understanding of their reactions should have been shown. It should also have been made perfectly clear from the start that our sole concern was the general interests of the working class, which of course includes the printing workers.



*From America***THE BALLOT & SOCIALISM***(continued from October issue)***Will of Majority Thwarted?**

**WHAT** do the Open Letter advocates mean by the ballot as the only weapon of emancipation? In the United States to-day, a majority can be kept from political power for a long period of time. Presumably by a majority the Open Letter means a majority of those elected to Congress, since it constantly quotes the SPGB with its ideas of conquering a majority of Parliament. Now, with the system of representation which prevails in the House—forgetting the Senate for a moment—a political party can have a majority of representatives without having a majority of the population. For example, several states are not, on the basis of population, entitled to even one representative, but the Constitution guarantees them one. In the Senate each state is entitled to two members regardless of population. Thus, 13 and a half million people in New York have the same representation as 110,000 in Nevada (1940 census).

The Open Letter advocates would suggest a change in this system of representation, but do they state how it must be done? Such a change would have to be a constitutional amendment, and the amendments are not carried by a majority. It takes a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress to offer an amendment (and under the system of proportion described above, this might mean a representation of 75 or 80 per cent. of the population), or upon application by three-fourths (75 per cent.) of the state legislatures, Congress must call a convention for the purpose of proposing amendments. Then, the amendments must be ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures or conventions in three-fourths of the states, whichever congress may propose.

This constitutional amendment process was purposely introduced by the so-called Founding Fathers (the business and property interests) to thwart the will of the majority.

How then, we ask the Open Letter comrades, can the majority assert itself? How could the majority make any change in the present economic system? To advocate by-passing the Constitution would be to bring the charges against the WSP of advocating "unconstitutional methods" and of being "subversive". The Socialist Labor Party does not miss the point. It openly advocates its change through article V of the Constitution, which is the one described above for making amendments.

**How Majority Will Assert Itself**

When the conscious majority come about, does one think for a moment that it will permit itself to be thwarted by such measures as required by the constitution? It will assert itself, perhaps to the extent of setting up a special convention representative of the people. This will be a vote; it will be an expression of the majority. Would the Open Letter advocate such a method (incidentally, a completely non-violent one, to answer their charge of our advocating violence) and will it come out and state the position of the WSP to be

the assertion of the majority, regardless of what the Constitution demands of this score?

Further, under the present system of electing Representatives and Senators, there is a two year lag in the case of the former, and a six year lag in the case of the latter. Thus, it is possible for the majority of Congress not to represent a majority of the population because, immediately following an election, a change of sentiment may come about among the workers, and yet it could be six years before a new election for Senators could be held, or it could even be eighteen years before the majority would be able to assert itself. What would the Open Letter advocates do in a case like that? If they demanded a recall, a new election, this would be the ballot, but it would not be according to the ballot system as it exists to-day.

As a matter of fact, how could a socialist take a seat in Congress, if to do so he must swear to uphold the Constitution, which permits the use of armed forces to put down strikes, and defends private property at every turn? The case of Victor Berger being seated during the first World War, after he was rejected several times by Congress, is cited as an example of how the will of the majority (in his district) was finally asserted. But Berger was a social democrat, and social democrats not only do not oppose capitalism from a revolutionary basis, but it is not opposed to their principles to support a Constitution which guarantees the continuation of capitalism. It would be quite different for a socialist.

**Majority Sentiment and Votes**

It is demanded of the Open Letter comrades

**NOTES TO WRITERS**

Our main editorial concern is to produce a well-ordered, balanced and interesting journal. Contributors will help us if they observe the following:—

1. Send in matter typed, double spaced and with wide margins. If it is not possible to have the matter typed then write clearly in INK and on one side of the paper only. State the number of words on the back of the article.
2. Be brief, but not at the expense of making your meaning clear. Keep the main points of your argument in mind as you write and ruthlessly exclude irrelevant and minor points. You will find it useful to use sub-headings as stages in the development of your case. It will certainly help us. Visualise your main conclusions before you start. Paragraphs should be neither too long or too short.

3. Be careful to see that you are absolutely accurate when quoting. One of the purposes of FORUM is to clarify controversies. Do not be disappointed if your article or letter is not published immediately. There may be many reasons for this.

that they clarify what they mean by the ballot. Do they mean an expression of the majority will regardless of the present legalistic set-up, or do they mean adherence to the latter? Another question which the Open Letter leaves untouched is this: What is meant by a majority? Actually a majority means more than half, so that if there are 75 million qualified voters, it would take 37,501,000 voters to establish socialism. However, if 20 per cent. of the population did not vote, then it would take only one more than 30,000,000 to get a majority, but this 30,000,000 and one vote would not represent a majority of the population, but only 40 per cent. The socialists would not represent a majority of the population at all, yet they would have a majority of those voting.

It behoves Open Letter advocates to signify which majority they seek, a majority of those eligible to vote, or a majority of the actual voters.

Under the present voting system, many people are not eligible to vote; for example, those under 21 years of age, those who cannot pay a poll tax in certain southern states, those who have been convicted for a "crime", and migratory workers and other workers who do not establish the proper residential requirements. In order to obtain an expression from the majority of the population, the socialists will have to conduct a struggle to have these and other disqualified people declared eligible to vote. Are the Open Letter comrades advocating that the WSP initiate such a campaign?

How much simpler and more scientific the position of the 1951 conference. The main task of socialists is to spread socialist ideas among the population. It runs candidates when and where it can to measure the revolutionary consciousness of the workers. When this consciousness reaches a majority sentiment (not actual votes, necessarily), the majority will know what to do. This consciousness may reveal itself in the ballots cast under our present legal set-up, or it may find expression in the growth of the socialist party.

**Conditions Will Determine**

When the Open Letter comrades ask, what other method than the ballot can a socialist majority use to show itself and the population as a whole that is a majority to begin with, they should first of all explain what is meant by the ballot. If they mean an expression of sentiment, then a very absence of votes—through a boycott of an election—may constitute such an expression of sentiment. If they mean a demonstration of socialist consciousness, a political strike may constitute such a demonstration. If it be stated that there is no reason to engage in such activities as long as the ballot is open to the socialists, in reply we ask, what if the ballot is sealed to the socialists by the forces which control the State?

I. CANTER.



# INNOCENTS ABROAD

THE days of the Continental grand tour have long passed. The only way that the Continent can be seen by people (workers) from this country to-day, is by an ability to lower one's standard of living so that the travel allowance lasts out. It was on this assumption that sixteen of us set out from Dover this summer, on a two month lorry tour of Central Europe.

The distance involved (Zagreb, Yugoslavia was the turning point) precluded any possibility of making a real study of any of the countries we passed through, yet it was possible to gain general impressions, usually confirming our prejudices, though whether this was due to our finding what we wanted to find is difficult to say.

The most striking thing about Belgium was the number of houses built since the war. Outside the towns rows of small villas have been built, all of them ferociously individualist in façade. Holland was a pleasant relief by comparison, with its almost total absence of private building. In Belgium wages are higher but so were prices. In Holland prices were nearly all below English levels but since the average wage appeared to be about four pounds a week it amounted very much to six of one and half a dozen of the other.

It was raining and cold the afternoon we crossed into Germany. Frontier guards and customs men seemed a very melancholy lot. Despite frenzied building activity most of the great cities of the Rhine still have acres of rubble in what were once their centres.

The appearance of the population was startling. Cripples and maimed were everywhere. Men in their thirties on crutches, staggering around on artificial legs, wagging artificial arms around like seals' flippers or regarding one in what appears to be a quizzical manner but is in reality a straight look distorted by the plastic surgery pulling their faces. Apart from this depressing side of the picture we got an impression of tremendous industrial activity in the country.

We found the Germans kind and friendly—with the exception of the natives of Frankfurt. This city is the headquarters of the American occupation, and, rather in the manner of Earl's Court landladies, suffers from an ambivalence of emotions towards its guests. The Americans form a very large linguistic and cultural minority among the Germans, and their uniforms and strident nasal accents mark them out as much in Frankfurt as the negroes in the United States are marked out by their colour. But they have money and the local tradespeople boast a large repertoire of tricks—short change, measure, etc., to which the wretched American soldier, who wants to be loved for himself and not for his money, submits.

In Munich we met a muscular lady, a trainer of what looked like tame wolves as guide dogs for the blind, who after screaming delight at having met some English people—"You always muddle through"—told us that the Americans were tolerated simply to discourage the Russians from aggression and that otherwise they were extremely unpopular in the city because they were boorish uncivilised, etc.

Austria seemed surprisingly different from Germany. Whether from history, geography, or any other factors, the people seemed more vivacious. We were warned before leaving Munich—"The Austrians are a very poor people"—but to judge by appearance the workers were as well if not better off than the Germans we met. The remark probably arose out of a mild xenophobia. We found this everywhere. The Belgians warned us against the Dutch and the Dutch against the Belgians. Everybody warned us against the Germans and the Austrians warned us against the Yugoslavs.

The first town we came to in Yugoslavia, an industrial centre (by Yugoslav standards) called Jesenice, had poor quality suits in its shop windows priced at twenty pounds and more. The price of manufactured goods was high, for other things the country is undoubtedly the cheapest in Europe to people with sterling. It has other attractions, the glacial lake at Bled, which is heated by sulphur springs, is worth a considerable sacrifice in travel money on its own.

But it was the people that most impressed us in Yugoslavia. Their sociability and generosity was such that one had a sense of "belonging" after being five minutes in a place. A garage proprietor whom we fetched from his house at bedtime opened up his workshop and cheerfully did our repairs and refused payment, saying: "I am an old motorist myself," as if we were members of a secret brotherhood. This was almost true. The number of vehicles in even the big towns was very small. Everywhere long lines of small carts drawn by two horses and each holding about a cubic yard of

stones were leading like ant columns out to where the foundations of a new road were probing into the fields.

The first burst of enthusiasm generated by Yugoslavia's bourgeois revolution showed little signs of flagging yet. The sensation of energy and optimism was inescapable. The standard and quantity of published matter in Slovene, a linguistic minority of a few millions, would do credit to many European countries and the shops were well stocked with food and other goods. A native of Zagreb who had spent twenty-six years in Canada and had returned to Yugoslavia after the war, thinking the millenium had arrived, told us that conditions had been desperate two years before with nothing but pictures of Tito and Stalin in the shops. An important factor in subsequent improvements of living conditions is probably the easier attitude toward the peasants who seemed to be bringing their produce to market and receiving good prices for it. They, the peasants, of course, dominate the scene. Women, aged thirty and looking more like fifty would occasionally be standing at the roadside, motionless as if they had been there for the last thousand years—which culturally speaking they had.

The political situation is very fluid at the present. There is not even the illusion of political liberty in the country.

If Yugoslavia provided the example of least conspicuous consumption we encountered, then Italy certainly provided that of the most. Venice was thronged with opulently dressed men escorting their beautiful and fashionable women out of big cars into gondolas and launches; ordering meals with an assurance that only money can give, in the superb restaurants of the city. It was all like something out of the past to us from a country where such things are done more discreetly, and where such display has become almost synonymous with vulgarity. Anyone who doubts the change in peoples' attitude towards riches and poverty would do well to visit Italy. Here is a bourgeoisie on the way up.

Switzerland was very much the same. The country is alleged to have the highest living standards in Europe, but we saw more down and outs there than we saw in Yugoslavia which has probably the lowest outside Spain.

We were glad to get into France. In a country like Switzerland, feared to the luxury tourist trade, there was not much room for a party of workers trying to get a cheap holiday. Although prices in France were much the same we were always welcome to sleep in a barn when the weather was bad, and our diet was made more interesting by fruit picked at the roadsides.

Although we had enjoyed the experience we were not sorry to be back. The difference in social conditions between the workers in one country and another is never very great, but that is not to deny any difference, and we were surprised to find how important to us were the little embellishments we enjoy.

## OOMBALA!!

ONE of our late rulers went to Africa during the recent Parliamentary recess to lecture to the natives about the benefits of our Welfare State. He had a tribe gathered at his feet and sang the praises of the National Health Service.

"Our people are helped to get glasses, wigs and teeth," he cried.

"Oombala!" chanted the natives with feeling.

"We have decreased working hours and put up wages!"

"Oombala! Oombala!"

"And we have nationalised our railways!"

Again came the chorus, "Oombala!"

After the talk the head man of the tribe came up to congratulate him and offered to show him the Temple of the Bull up on a nearby hill.

The M.P. was delighted at this chance to add a little local colour to the story he was preparing to tell his constituents, so off they went.

They passed dozens of Sacred Bulls and not a few Sacred Cows on the way up, and the M.P. was about to enter the Temple, when the head man pulled him back suddenly, "Be careful how you go!" he said, "It's knee deep in Oombala!"

*Burntisland Shipyard Journal.*

K. SMITH.



# A Plea for Clarity

## A Plea for Clarity

Reply to "The Nature of the Socialist Revolution."

COMRADE EVANS may be the author of a very original thesis on the coming Socialist Revolution. But how are we to know? If obscurity be the hallmark of a brilliant thinker, the comrade would have achieved more, by writing with invisible ink. We would be as wise in either case. Enumeration of eight points from the article, indicate the high standard of obscurity coupled with the low standard of political accuracy.

A "... We are busy discussing our own position. This healthy situation ... reflects the uncertainties of a revolution in process in contrast with the certainties of the nineteenth century consolidation of revolution achieved."

Reply—We are always discussing our position. This healthy situation reflects the fact that socialists claiming to have accurate knowledge of society must always discuss the position. What were the "certainties" of the nineteenth century, and what does the phrase "consolidation of revolution achieved" mean? What was achieved? Who achieved it?

B "... The Industrial Revolution ... established social production ... is not immediately followed by the revolution for social ownership, but by the State Capitalist revolution which establishes the institutional technique (and thereby the ideological demand) for the classless administration of the common weal."

Reply—The Industrial Revolution established Capitalist production. State capitalism is but a refinement of Capitalism, and does not amount to a revolution, the word revolution means complete change, fundamental reconstruction or overthrow of a system. Where is the evidence that an ideological demand, exists for the classless administration of the common weal?

C "... The propositions here put forward have to be compressed ... much more than is said must be left unsaid, and, much more of what is said must be left unexplained."

Reply—If FORUM has been so ardently desired by Party members for expressing ideas, why in the very first issue do we meet with compression? If what I want to say, cannot be said, and, if more important, cannot be explained, what are we paying for? Or can it be that Comrade Evans knows not what to say nor what to leave unsaid?

D "... State control furthers the depersonalising of property, *this depersonalising begins the expropriation which is the Socialist aim.*"

Reply—There is a famous phrase which goes as Capitalism develops it becomes concentrated into fewer and fewer hands, in what sense is that depersonalising? The opposite tendency appears very much in evidence. Can any sort or degree of expropriation *compatible* with the socialist idea be named at the present day?

E "Within the State there begins the form of production for use ..."

Reply—All production, or most, has use as an aim, since the secondary function of com-

modities is use, but the primary aim remains extraction of profit. Where will you find production of a single button or tooth brush for the love of the thing?

G "The genius of Marx lay in his talent for seeing so clearly what was going on under his nose. And it still remains to some extent our evil genius that we see so clearly what went on under Marx's nose."

Reply—The second part makes the whole of this piece meaningless. Would it be unkind at this point to jibe, that the genius of Evans is in his talent for *not* seeing clearly what is going on under Evans' nose?

H "... replace the propagandists' impossible task of telling people what they don't know by the historically creative one of the articulating for them what they do."

Reply—Are we to understand that the spread—slight as it has been—of socialist ideas is not the work of propagandists? Explanation please! As to historical creativeness, surely that is in work done not words said. Changes in history are effected by actions, not by *descriptions* of actions.

To sum up. If ideas are expressed vaguely then they are open to distortion and misunderstanding, the fault being with the writer not the reader. If you want a child to know raspberry jam is bad for the sewing machine, you say so simply.

Please Comrade Evans treat us as children—but as *intelligent* ones!

M. BROWN.

## OUR PREMISES

AT the present time the Party has no cash balance in hand, and it has been suggested that our premises could either be sold or mortgaged, and the proceeds used to replenish our sadly depleted banking account and provide funds for an extension of our socialist propaganda. Having had the premises in use for about eighteen months, we have now had some additional experience on which to draw.

In view of the fact that the decision to go through with the purchase of these premises was bitterly contested by a portion of the membership, views expressed here may be subject to controversy. How does our experience of the past year measure up against our early hopes? What of the future?

Only very few, if any, of our members would consider the proposition of buying premises if they could be leased or rented. Last year, had we not bought premises we would have been able to afford only a few basement rooms or other unsuitable accommodation on rent.

Should we sell? If we did, although we would probab'y get back more than was paid for, we should then be in the same unpleasant dilemma over premises previously stated.

Should we mortgage? Our organisation could use the money so obtained to spread more propaganda—a necessary preliminary, no doubt, in the attaining of our object. Although we should still retain the use of our premises, borrowing money on mortgage has disadvantages. We can only spend the money once. If we do not repay the mortgage we must pay

the interest. A simple calculation will show that such interest payments will eventually exceed the principal—and, don't forget, the original amount of loan will still be owing. If, on the other hand, we club together to repay the loan, there doesn't seem a lot of point in getting a mortgage.

It might be a sounder scheme to consider methods of getting Party expenditure to equal income, and thus stop the financial rot that seems to have set in on our affairs.

For instance, the cost of stationery, speakers' fares, etc., have risen during the last few years, but the dues have not been increased. Then there is a loss on the sale of the S.S. These are two leakages that could well be stopped.

Some Comrades, recognising that the acquisition of our present H.Q. has got us out of the trouble we were previously in, are content to leave the matter rest. Others of us have greater hopes regarding the development in the use of No. 52. We visualise it being built up as a centre of the socialist movement. The attainment of such an aim would have the effect of revitalising the Party generally through the consequent spread of enthusiasm, as well as by the addition of new blood, i.e., of more workers for our cause.

More activity at No. 52 incidentally means more income from sales of literature: collections and canteen, and money can be made good use of. Producing political plays opens up another field of propaganda previously unexploited by the Party. Here also No. 52

could be used. Incidentally, this type of training would be helpful for young speakers.

When the Party decides to fight a parliamentary constituency in London, Clapham might be worth considering. There would be no extra cost of election premises, and the interest aroused might help to make the place better known as a Socialist centre.

Once our Premises at No. 52 have proved as useful as many of us believe is possible, then we can confidently anticipate the demand for establishment of premises for other Branches of the Party.

F. OFFORD.

## REPLY

LET us agree at once that unless we can acquire suitable premises to lease or rent, it would be foolish to dispose of our present Head Office.

There is, however, no reason at all why we should not make every effort to find alternative accommodation. For, on the basis of the figures available, if we could rent premises for anything up to £9 per week (our present approximate running expenses at 52 Clapham High Street) we could dispose of our present premises and utilise the proceeds of the sale for propaganda purposes.

Let us then, not accept the position that we are committed for all time to staying at 52 Clapham High Street, but rather regard it as a temporary freezing of our funds until such time as they can be released for our real



work of socialist propaganda.

It is, of course, not true to say that the Party had no alternative to purchasing the Clapham High Street premises. There were alternatives, e.g., the basement at Rugby Chambers for storage and the hiring of a small hall for E.C. meetings, but the majority of the members who crowded into the Holborn Hall on 18th February, 1951, were either unaware of them or had already made up their minds to have 52 Clapham High Street. It will be remembered that one of the reasons for the opposition to the scheme was that it was being thrust upon the Party without adequate information being available, and because no alternative schemes were considered. Another reason was that the scheme would place too great a strain on the financial resources of the Party and this, unfortunately, has proved to be correct. So much so that we are now considering all kinds of desperate remedies for what is virtually our financial ruin.

The cost of purchasing the premises, of carrying out repairs and alterations, and the day to day running expenses involved, have played a large part in bringing us to our present financial difficulties. Moreover, a considerable amount must be spent on the premises before they can be fully utilised.

Let us turn to the "hopes regarding the development in the use of No. 52", to quote the writer to whose article we are replying. He "visualises No. 52 being built up as a centre of the socialist movement". How is this to be done? Why, by urging the South West London Branch to organise Sunday evening meetings for the local workers and by producing political plays. It is perhaps unfair to complain of the poverty of the writer's suggestions for what other activities could he suggest, apart from those which have nothing to do with socialist propaganda? Instead of finding premises suitable for our activities some comrades are busily seeking activities suitable for our premises. And so, we get attempts to start activities for which there is no demand, and no enthusiasm in the Party. The realisation that there is insufficient Party activity, i.e., propaganda, education and organisation, fully to utilise the premises leads to suggestions for all kinds of social activity. It may be all very well to have a club in Clapham for the benefit of those living nearby, and those who find it easy to reach, but it is a luxury for which the whole of the Party must pay and it can be maintained only at the expense of socialist propaganda.

It was argued by those in favour of purchasing the premises that the possession of them would lead to greater activities and enthusiasm. But it is over eighteen months since we moved in, and apart from Tuesday evenings there is seldom more than a handful of members on the premises.

The energies being put into the organisation of socials, jumble sales, canteen management and the energies required for the production of plays and so on, could surely be better spent on socialist propaganda.

The Party does not exist to provide a social life for its members. The fact that some members may derive a social life from their membership of the Party is incidental. The only reason for the Party's existence is the necessity of organising propaganda for socialism.

A. P.

# NEWSPPOINTS

(formerly issued as duplicated Speakers' Notes)

Notes and comments on the news that are likely to be useful to members in illustrating the case for Socialism to others. Please send cuttings, together with their source and date of reference, to the Propaganda Research Committee at Head Office.

## What We Have We Hold

"This is a rake's progress. If there is one thing we are not prepared to do it is to give up our peacetime markets to our competitors in return for temporary war-time markets."

Mr. Bevan at Labour Party Conference, 29/9/52.  
News Chronicle, 30/9/52.

## 'Peace Could Bring Biggest Slump'

Speaking at Louth yesterday, Mr. Cyril Osborne, M.P., said that if Marshal Stalin were to accept an invitation to the Coronation, or if the Korean war were to end, there would be a dreadful fall in commodity prices. Unless we make plans in conjunction with America to deal with the problems that must arise when the fighting ended, there would be the greatest slump the capitalist system had ever known.

"What, for example, is to happen to the stockpiles of strategic raw materials?" asked Mr. Osborne. "Will they be marketed in an orderly way and on a long-term plan? What about the men who will be demobilised? Are plans being made to find them civilian jobs? How long will it take to convert the engineering industry from war to peace production? What is to happen when the rearmament orders fall off?"

Observer, 26/10/52.

## E. German 'Socialism'

The time is now ripe for building Socialism in the German Democratic Republic, Walter Ulbricht, Deputy Prime Minister and General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party, announced.

He stressed that the construction of Socialism would not entail the confiscation of small businesses.

"The creation of the economic basis of Socialism demands in the first place the increase of Socialist property through the further development of the nationally owned sector of the economy, which has assumed a Socialist character. Contrary to the claims of our opponents we have no intention of confiscating small businesses, since we do not wish to impose upon the state the unnecessary burden of carrying out the functions which they at present carry out in the production."

The armed forces which will be raised in East Germany will be trained in a spirit of internationalism, in a spirit of respect for other nations and of love for the workers of all lands, stated President Wilhelm Pieck in a speech to the Party Conference of the Socialist Unity Party.

Democratic German Report, 18/7/52.

## Canada Hit By British Competition

British competition had plunged Canada's wool textile industry into severe depression, Mr. Ryland Daniels, president of the Paton Manufacturing Company, said at the firm's annual meeting in Montreal.

He said that 87 per cent. of wool and worsted cloths imported into Canada in 1951 came from the United Kingdom. He called on the Government to set up tariff barriers to slow the flood of imports. The Canadian tariff on imported woollens was among the lowest in the world and was hopelessly inadequate in the face of present international conditions.

The situation was aggravated by low British wages, which were about 43 per cent. of those paid in Canada, and the apparent willingness of the British to sell at sacrifice prices.

"As a result," said Mr. Daniels, "British worsteds are being landed here at prices much below the cost of production in Canada based on replacement value of wool tops."

British competition might force his and other companies to reduce employment still further before the turning point was reached.—British United Press.

Yorkshire Post, 12/7/52.

## Food Scarcity in Madras

Delhi, October 8.

Mr. Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, addressing a public meeting yesterday during his tour of the famine threatened areas of Madras state, said the demand for the application of the famine code would not solve the problem of food scarcity in the Rayalaseema area. He said he disliked such an approach to the problem because the idea implied doling out charity to impoverished people. Although there were many poor people in the country, they should not be treated as beggars waiting for charity.

In Madras state nearly four million people live in areas which are officially regarded as "scarcity affected," and therefore threatened by famine (a word which Government officials seem reluctant to use).

According to Government officials, the present food problem in Madras is primarily one of cost and of the inability of the impoverished peasant to buy the food which successive monsoon failures have prevented him from growing himself. To the solution of this problem the Madras Government has contributed nothing by its decision earlier this summer to remove many of the controls on food. Now the State Government is trying to meet the situation by deploying large numbers of kitchens dispensing free gruel to the destitute, and by organising relief works to enable others to earn sufficient to buy such supplies of food as are available.

Times, 9/10/52.

## Worth Remembering

The causes of the economic storm which hit Britain last year were not within the Labour Government's control and are not within the control of the Tory Government to-day, Mr. Hugh Gaitskell told a Labour Party Rally at Rhyl.

Daily Herald, 22/9/52.

## They Queue To Learn

"... 'classes full' notices went up all over London at Women's Institutes, Technical Colleges and Polytechnics within a few hours of the doors opening. ... Throughout England and Wales 350,000 class entries were received for handicraft classes last year compared with 336,000 for the clerical courses."

Few students give up less than three nights a week to classes—some go five nights—and on nights off there is always homework and reading. ...

The modern question—Lazy? Pleasure Loving? Don't believe it unless you think the profitable pleasure so many derive from a pursuit of knowledge is wrong.

News Chronicle, 22/9/52.

## Cyprus Plan

Mr. Antony Head, the War Minister, arriving back in London to-day after a 6,000-mile tour in the Middle East, said that there was no base which could take the place of Egypt.

"We are not looking at Cyprus or any other place as an alternative base," he said. "There is nowhere that can be compared with Egypt as a base in the Middle East."

To have a base in the Middle East was absolutely vital strategically.

"The base in Egypt is an immense installation," said Mr. Head. "To move it would be a massive project and would take a number of years."

"There is not another place a quarter as good. It was vital to the defence of the West."

CYPRUS PLAN

"If we did not have the base there, we should not have anywhere in the Middle East to concentrate, equip and maintain troops."

Evening Standard, 24/9/52.